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THE MIDNIGHT GUEST.

A DETECTIVE STORY BY FRED M. WHITE,

Author of "The Crimson Blind," "The Corner House," Etc.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

A Blood Relation.

Walter choked down an ugly word that rose to his lips. He resented the intrusion just at a moment when he particularly desired to be alone with Vera. Who was it, he wondered, who came so late? And who rang so imperiously and persistently for admission? He flung back bolt and chain and opened the door. With her nerves all unstrung, and with a certain intuition of impending calamity upon her, Vera had followed him into the hall. She had dried her eyes now; she showed little sign of her recent agitation. She heard Walter's exclamation as he recognized the intruder.

"Good heavens, it is Mrs. Delahay!" he cried. "What can you want here at this hour?"

"The studio," Mrs. Delahay gasped. "Get to the studio at once. If your uncle should happen to be there——"

"You can reassure yourself on that point," Walter said. "Lord Ravenspur is at present in his bed room."

Maria Delahay pressed her hand to her heart. She gave a little gasp of relief. She was too breathless to explain. All she needed now was a chair to support her failing limbs. As Walter stood there it flashed upon him that something wrong must be taking place in connection with the studio. He had not forgotten the vivid incident of the other night. Perhaps at this very moment the clue to the puzzle was in his hands. He turned round, and his gaze fell upon Vera, who was watching Mrs. Delahay curiously.

"Take this lady into the drawing room," he said, "and wait till I come back. I shan't be very long."

Vera came forward with a sympathetic smile upon her face. A light was shining on her features. Maria Delahay could see how fair and sweet she was. And so this, she thought, was her sister's child. This was the girl from whom her mother had voluntarily separated herself for upward of eighteen years. It seemed impossible, incredible to believe, but there it was. And the girl's hand was under Mrs. Delahay's arm now. She was being gently assisted as far as the drawing room.

"I am sure you are Mrs. Delahay," Vera said, in her most sympathetic voice. "If all had gone well we should have met before now. I cannot tell you how sorry I am for you. I do hope this dreadful mystery will be cleared up before long. And now can I get you anything? I suppose you came to see Lord Ravenspur?"

Maria Delahay hesitated for a moment. There was no occasion to tell this beautiful child the dread import of her presence there. It seemed a wicked thing to bring her within the range of the trouble.

"I should like to see Lord Ravenspur, yes," she said. "So you are his ward, Vera Rayne? Really, I cannot see any likeness between you and your father."

The words had slipped unconsciously from Maria Delahay's lips before she had time to think what she was saying. It was only when she noted the startled look in Vera's eyes that she realized the full extent of her imprudent speech.

"Did you know my father?" Vera cried.

"What am I saying!" Mrs. Delahay exclaimed. "My head is so dazed and confused that I don't know what I am talking about. Just for a moment I was filled with a foolish idea that you were Lord Ravenspur's daughter. It would be strange if you bore a likeness to him, seeing that he is only your guardian."

Vera was silent for a moment. Mrs. Delahay's impetuous speech had filled her with misgivings. She did not know, she could not feel sure that, after all, Lord Ravenspur might stand in closer relationship to her than that of a guardian. But she put the trouble out of her mind now. She had other things to occupy her attention. And after all said and done, the poor creature by her side was in deeper grief and anxiety than herself.

"I think I will go up and tell my guardian you are here," she said. "I know he will be glad to see you."

Vera was spared the trouble, for at that moment Ravenspur came into the room with a bundle of papers in his hand. He started as he caught sight of Mrs. Delahay.

"You here at this hour!" he exclaimed. "I hope——"

"No, there is nothing particularly wrong," the woman said. "I should like a few words with you if I am not intruding."

Vera discreetly left the room and walked off toward the library. There was a stern expression on Ravenspur's face as he looked at his visitor. He waited for her to speak.

"I daresay you will think this is rather singular of me," she faltered, "but I came here tonight because your life is in danger. I believe that the man called Luigi Silva is under your roof at the present moment. You know who I mean?"

"I know perfectly well," Ravenspur replied. "It would be absurd to pretend to misunderstand you. And so it turns out after all that you are the sister of my poor friend Flavio's wife. Did Delahay know your identity before he married you?"

"He knew all there was that was worth knowing," the woman said, a little defiantly. "He knew the story of my miserable youth, for instance. I don't want you to misunderstand me. I don't wish to pretend that I had any ardent passion for my husband. But my affection was deep and sincere, and my loss is almost more than I can bear. Oh, I know what you are going to say. You are going to ask what I know about that wretched Flavio affair. I repeat in all sincerity that I knew nothing till the other day. I did not even know that my sister was alive, not until I visited her tonight at her house in Isleworth road. I was not aware that she had married Boris Flavio. I did not know that she had a child——"

"Do you know who the child is?" Ravenspur asked swiftly.

"Yes, I know now," was the significant reply. "I have just been talking to her. What a beautiful girl she is! How sweet and natural. How open and candid is her face. It seems almost incredible to me that my sister could have forgotten her child all these years. I could not have done so."

"No, nor any other woman worthy of the name," Ravenspur said grimly. "But though you lived with your sister till early womanhood, you had no real conception of her character. I never met her myself, for which I am devoutly thankful. But I learnt enough, and more than enough, of her character from Flavio's letters to me. If ever a man was cursed with a fiend incarnate in the shape of a wife, Flavio was that man. Oh, I don't wish to give you pain, for you have suffered enough of late. But I know what I am talking about. The mere fact that you alluded to just now is proof positive that your sister is incapable of affection for her child. More or less by accident you have made this discovery tonight. By sheer chance you know that your sister's daughter is under my roof. For a long time past I have known that some agency has been at work to deprive me of the girl, an agency so utterly unscrupulous that my very life is in danger. I suppose that man is acting for your sister, who has a sudden whim to gain possession of her child once more. And now I am going to ask you a favor. You are to say nothing of what you have found out tonight. I have told you what your sister is, and no doubt my words will prove true before long. I am going to ask you to give me a solemn promise that——"

"It is too late," Mrs. Delahay exclaimed. "Whatever my sister may be is all beside the point. She knows where her daughter is, and Luigi Silva knows also. He told us everything not long ago. I found out by accident that he was coming here. I saw him enter the house a few moments ago. I believe he is in your studio at the present moment. That is why I rang the bell so furiously; that is why I prayed I should not be too late."

Ravenspur started violently.

"Oh, this is intolerable," he cried. "One could hardly believe it possible that this is London in the twentieth century. I had thought that those insane vendettas had died out before this, even in Corsica. I must go at once and see——"

As the speaker turned away Maria Delahay held out a detaining hand. Her face was pale and pleading.

"Your life is too valuable to be risked in that headstrong fashion," she said. "Besides, I have already warned your nephew, who appears to know everything. He went off to the studio at once. I have no doubt that he has scared Silva away by this time. But why don't you put this matter in the hands of the police? Why run this risk when a few words would prevent any danger? And there need be no scandal. Silva could be warned. He would have to leave the country, and then there would be an end——"

"And this from you who are a half Corsican yourself," Ravenspur said reproachfully. "I could free myself from Silva, no doubt, but before many months had passed another man would take his place and my danger would be greater than ever. You see I have the advantage of knowing my present assailant. To quote the old saying, 'Better a devil you know than a devil you don't know.'"

Maria Delahay had nothing to say in reply. She was turning the matter rapidly over in her mind. It seemed to her that she could see a way out of the difficulty.

"I think," she began, "that perhaps——"

The words were never finished, for suddenly the tense silence of the house was broken by a quick cry and the tinkling sound of broken glass. Then, in the distance somewhere a door banged sullenly, and silence fell over the house once more.

(To be continued tomorrow.)

New Ideas for Summer Party.

If you can manage it in any way, give your evening party out of doors, on the lawn if possible, or if not possible on a veranda. You can make it attractive by having Japanese lanterns hung about to give light, and seats and little tables where, at the proper time, refreshments are served.

In summer you can get plenty of wild flowers and greens to make the house and verandas pretty. You can have boughs of greens in the fireplaces, and in the corners vases of daisies or roses; about the light fixtures and over the windows trailing vines.

Or you can make it a fan party. Give all the guests on entering pretty fans on which is written a list of questions. These questions should pertain to fans. If you do not think it would tax the brain too much you can find quotations in which fans figure. Look in any good quotation book for these. Ask for the names of the countries where the use of fans is a feature, and at the end make all tell some episode in which a fan has figured or invent a tale. For prizes, give to the successful girl a pretty fan in a box, and to the man a fan-shaped case for holding shaving paper, or a blotter, or a stud holder.

You then can have the partners for supper find each other by matching wee fans, and the supper may carry out the same idea, for you can ornament the dishes with tiny fans for the hair that are sold in the shops where Japanese goods are found. Simple refreshments would be jellied chicken and a vegetable salad dressed with mayonnaise, orange ice served in scooped-out oranges, with cake and iced coffee in glasses. This will be enough.

If you do not want a contest in the fan program have games to play. A hunt for tiny fans all over the house would be good, or a flower hunt, or any of the games in vogue for young people.

Fresh.

From the Reader.

Employer—"See her! I didn't go into business yesterday."

New clerk—"What's this morning, sir?"

Business Men Abroad Condemn Our Consuls

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, September 17, 1907.

THAT the American consular service fully lives up to its reputation for inefficiency is the conclusion of Dr. Richard Davenport Harlan, former president of Lake Forest University, Ill., and eldest son of Justice Harlan of the United States Supreme Court. He has been making a tour of England and France in the interests of the George Washington University, and has interviewed hundreds of business men, both American and foreign, who almost without exception have roasted the United States consular service to a brown crisp.

Typical of many who talked to Dr. Harlan, an American-born building contractor, one of the largest in his line, who does business in almost every large country in Europe, though asking that his name be withheld, declared that sad experience had taught him that it was only a waste of time to deal with an American consular office. So certain had he become of this that he now practically ignored the representatives of the United States, and whenever he had need of the service of a consul he repaired to the office of the British agent, his company being registered under the laws of Great Britain. The same man declared that for patriotic reasons he would rather deal with the representative of his native country, but found it impossible to do so.

* * *

The prime purpose of Dr. Harlan's tour, which has just been completed, was an examination of the great Ecole des Sciences Politiques in Paris and the London School of Economics and Political Science. It is the intention of the directors of the George Washington University to model that institution after these two famous schools, and Dr. Harlan, as the representative of the movement in the United States, has been having a look around. He has been studying the features that are likely to appeal to the American needs. Just before he sailed for Canada, where he will visit his father at Murray Bay, Dr. Harlan granted me a very full talk on the movement in the United States and on what he had seen in France and England.

Speaking of the Paris school he said:

"The story of the foundation and growth of the Ecole des Sciences Politiques makes one of the brightest pages in recent French history. At the close of the Franco-Prussian war, the one thought uppermost in the minds of every intelligent patriotic Frenchman was, 'What can be done to lift our country out of the dust and make a new France?'

"It came into the heart of Emile Boutmy that the 'best way for him to help his country was to found a school where her sons might acquire a better knowledge of the nations of the world (France included), of diplomacy, history, social questions and the political sciences.' With this end in view, Boutmy founded the Ecole des Sciences Politiques, in 1871, and gave generously of his means and all his energies and time to its upbuilding.

"The success of this school was instantaneous. It now employs fifty professors and instructors and has 1,000 students. So important has been its service to France that during the past ten years all of the appointees to the French foreign service, whether diplomatic or consular, with only three exceptions, have been graduates of this school.

"Its diploma not only helps to open the door to the public service, but has enabled its graduates to carry off many of the richest prizes in large commercial enterprises in France, and Emile Boutmy's name will always be remembered as one of the benefactors of modern France.

* * *

"The growth of the London School of Economics has been even more rapid than that of the Paris school. It was founded in 1893, and within one year had to move to larger quarters. In 1900, when the University of London was remodeled, the School of Economics was admitted as a school of the university, and once more it outgrew its premises.

"Its present building in Clare Market was opened by Lord Rosebery in 1902. Its enrollment was immediately doubled, increasing from 542 to 1,002. It has steadily grown in numbers, reaching a total of 1,635 students for the year 1906-07.

"Like the Paris school, the London School of Economics is independent of government control, although it now receives a government subsidy of from 2,500 to 3,000 pounds per year, because of its services to the state. For example:

"It now receives each session 400 students nominated by eight of the great railway companies from among the most promising of its employes. During the past year the school has undertaken for the secretary of state for war the administrative training of thirty selected officers and a second course of similar nature has been arranged for the coming session. Many important private corporations are now getting into the habit of sending their best clerks to this school after business hours in order to increase their efficiency.

"The London and Paris schools were founded because there did not exist in France or England any system of commercial education of a university type, and of scientific training in public administration.

"Encouraged by the marked success of the Paris and London schools," Dr. Harlan continued, "the George Washington University proposes to do a like service for the United States and for the western hemisphere generally by the development of a special college of the political sciences.

"We propose, however, to include jurisprudence and the leading oriental languages, neither of which branches of study is covered by the London school. We shall also include extensive courses in commerce, which in Paris is relegated to a separate and special school.

* * *

"As soon as this college of the political sciences is thoroughly organized and properly endowed, some plan will undoubtedly be worked out by which the State Department will co-operate in a very practical way in preparing men who wish to apply for appointment. For example: Suppose a man hopes some day to become one of the American consuls to France. There is today locked up in the State Department at Washington and its consular agencies in France a rich mine of correspondence bearing on the commercial and trade relations between the two countries for many decades. All such facts will be tabulated properly and made educationally available for the post-graduate student who hopes to prepare himself for appointment at an American consulate in France. Such a student will, of course, master the French language, in addition to all the other studies which would equip him for service to his country.

"Of course, no amount of training will help a man who has not the proper personal qualifications. Here, as in every other walk of life, it is "the man behind the gun" that counts. But given the right kind of man and equip him in advance of his appointment, and such a man will be as efficient within three months after his appointment as the best man was under the old system at the end of several years' experience.

"Few Americans are aware of the fact that the federal government is spending $8,000,000 annually in connection with the great scientific and technical bureaus and laboratories of the government situated in Washington itself. That represents a capital of $200,000,000—an endowment such as no private institution can ever hope to possess. But the results of that splendid work are to a large extent hidden away in governments reports and bulletins. What is imperatively demanded, in the interests of American agriculture and commerce, is a thoroughly organized university for graduate work at the capital itself, with large laboratories of its own, to be sure, but so managed as to co-operate with these government bureaus and laboratories, in training and sending out into American agriculture and commerce well-equipped men. An annual output of 100 men would be worth more than 1,000,000 bulletins, inestimable and necessary as those bulletins certainly are. This the George Washington expects to do."

* * *

Speaking of financial matters, Dr. Harlan said:

"For the work we have planned we must have $3,500,000 at least. Toward this amount a very prominent American who gives with a free hand is now considering a gift of $1,000,000, just to start the ball rolling.

"We already have an equity of a million dollars in our present site and buildings. We are now negotiating for the purchase of a splendid new site, costing about $800,000, situated somewhere on the heights overlooking the finest residential quarter of the city, within twelve minutes' street car ride from the State Department. Of that $800,000 we have in cash or in good subscriptions about $400,000 from the citizens of Washington.

"Then we already have two large buildings guaranteed, costing about $200,000 each, conditioned, however, upon our taking a certain piece of property admirably adapted to the purpose. In addition, a society of patriotic women, called the George Washington Memorial Association, has undertaken to raise $500,000 for the George Washington Memorial Hall, which is to be the chief building upon the new campus. This new hall will contain the administration offices of the university, lecture rooms and a large auditorium for commencement purposes, which would also be available as a meeting place for patriotic, scientific and educational societies of all kinds."

Clouds of Adversity Beset English Composer

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, September 21, 1907.

IT is the irony of fate that Tom Maguire, the one-time famous composer of popular songs, who wrote "Wait Till the Clouds Roll By," should find himself heavily beset by the clouds of adversity. Blind, deaf and compelled to earn an insufficient living by playing the concertina before the lines of people who wait at the doors of London's theaters nightly, he has been arrested for "creating an obstruction" and haled into court, but was discharged by a kind-hearted magistrate.

Maguire's case is a striking contrast to the stories one reads of thousands of dollars made out of popular songs. In his day Maguire's songs were as popular as any, but if thousands were made from them he, at least, never saw any of them.

"Wait Till the Clouds Roll By" and "Three Leaves of Shamrock," both of which were written by Maguire, were almost as popular and widely known in the United States as here. His "Bold Robert Emmett," "The Sweetest Sweetheart of All," "Spare the Old Mud Cabin," "The Soldier's Letter," "The Wars Are Over, Mother, Dear" and "Kathleen Ashore" all made big hits here, and thousands of copies were sold, yet Tom never received a penny of royalty. For his "Three Leaves of Shamrock" he was paid $40; "Spare the Old Mud Cabin" netted him $25, and "The Soldier's Letter" he sold for $16.

* * *

Maguire's songs have been the stepping stones to popular favor for many of England's famous music hall stars. He wrote the words for "Oh, Jeremiah, Don't You Go to Sea," which was one of the early successes of Marie Lloyd. Marie is now the highest-paid singer on the English halls and earns more per week than Tom earned for all his songs put together. The two Macs, Henry Melville, Charles Russell, Harry Tate and Harry Monkhouse sang others of his songs nightly at Deacon's Music Hall, the old Gaiety and other famous halls of days gone by.

Maguire makes his way about with the help of his wife. He plays some of his old tunes, and she tries to sell cheap copies of the music. His concertina is cracked and the music is wretched, but the devoted wife can see no blemish.

"If he only had a new concertina," she said in court, "Tom could get a 'turn' at one of the music halls. He plays just lovely, does Tom."

"For old times' sake" some of those who have profited by the genius of the fallen song-writer are going to help him. Hundreds of less-deserving people than he make their living by singing and playing to the people waiting to get into the London theaters. But, unlike them, Tom and his wife are old and infirm and cannot "23" upon the approach of a bobbie.

On Fine Linen.

From Tatler.

Fine linen is so much in use now as a decorative fabric that a few hints about how to take care of it may be useful. From the remotest ages it has been looked upon as one of the most valuable items of household equipment. Yet there are a few simple facts about the keeping of it that even many excellent housewives do not know. The life of a good piece of linen ought to be considerably more than a generation, yet by reason of the evil treatment it too often receives at the hands of the laundrymaid it is often shortened to a few years at most.

Firstly, it should never be starched. It should be thoroughly rinsed in clean water and pure soap and then given plenty of sunlight and fresh air. Then it must be ironed damp to get that fine satin sheen which is its natural characteristic. If ironed dry it becomes dull and tufty.

A Natty Short Coat.

6990—A smart little coat for wearing whenever a lightweight outdoor garment is needed is always an acceptable addition to the feminine wardrobe, and the design illustrated is especially desirable because of its simple but effective modeling, which is well within the scope of the home dressmaker. The coat, which is modeled in one of the new striped broadcloths, is semi-fitting, and owes its jauntiness mainly to its excellent shaping, which is expressly intended to emphasize the best lines of the figure. It is an especially good model for the slender type of woman, to whom neither a tight-fitting jacket nor a loose wrap is wholly becoming. It is finished in tailored style, with stitched seams and a mannish collar and sleeve, all of which are in close accord with the latest approved designs. The medium size requires 2¼ yards of 54-inch cloth to make.

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